

“Towards Professional Multilingualism?” Reconceptualising the school coordinator role in Initial Teacher Training.

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Abstract

This article explores the school coordinator role in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in England. Recognising that mentoring is fully embedded and highly researched in ITT, it argues the role of the coordinator, while integral to partnerships (DfE, 1992) is far less researched. We investigate tensions in the role, between managing programme-wide quality assurance, teaching professional studies and developing school-based mentors. These questions were explored through multi-site case studies with four HEIs and their partner schools in four linked phases of data collection. Data analysis established a range of different conceptualisations of the role, with only limited evidence of a development role with their mentors. We argue for policies which establish a more coherent conceptualisation of the role, and an agreed nomenclature. A key recommendation is to free coordinators from bureaucratic demands on their time to enable them to exemplify a new “professional multilingualism”.

Key words: ITT coordinator role, school/HEI ITT partnerships

Introduction

In a recent symposium keynote, Anne Edwards suggested Initial Teacher Education needs collaborating colleagues to utilise “professional multilingualism, or a capacity to understand and talk with other professionals” (Edwards, A, 2007). She referred to a little known study for the Teacher Development Agency (Best et al, 2005) reporting an increasing number of schools working with more than one HEI for ITT, which noted that some schools are managing this increased complexity by starting to set the training agenda for the students (trainees) who are placed with them. The report noted (and although blindingly obvious, this is worth underlining) that student teachers are easily integrated into those schools which are keen to take them. This contrasts with the evidence that:

“Where (trainees) are seen as a necessary evil, managed, but not developed, by a professional mentor who is a member of the senior team without either time or recognition for the liaison work necessary, the attitude of the school staff as a whole tends to see the activity as an additional burden, often with limited empathy or support for the training process” (Glover and Mardle 1996).

Given the school coordinator role has been integral to ITT in England for over 15 years, we were keen to explore the opportunities implicit in the role, and the challenges faced by the role holders, as part of an ongoing discussion about school partnerships and ITT. (see for example special edition of *Curriculum Journal* on School-based teacher development, 18 (3), 2007). The investigation we report on has revealed a need to reconceptualise the coordinator role.

It is worth noting that the literature on ITT Partnerships between schools and HEIs in England over the last 15 years demonstrates close attention to mentoring and related skills, while over the same period, there has been a barely perceptible recognition of the role of the ITT school coordinator (also known in some programmes as the professional tutor, or in primary programmes as the coordinating mentor), despite an expectation that they have to manage the quality of school-based ITT in increasingly complex partnerships. We take the view that, placed at the centre of learning and development in their own schools, coordinators are perfectly placed, in a senior position in their own school to act as “professional multilinguists”, providing support and context-specific training and development for colleagues fulfilling the vital role of ITT mentor, as well as the administrative and QA roles demanded by the HEIs.

Part of the problem of the lack of recognition appears to be a dearth of relevant, up-to-date research or professional literature focussing on the coordinator role in practice, although conceptualisations were published when the last major changes to ITT were being enacted (McIntyre et al, 1994). The project on which this article is based sought to explore current practice in primary and secondary schools with a view to providing an increased understanding of the issues related to this important ITT role. To seek new insights, the team sought multiple sources of evidence, through a review of the relevant literature, an analysis of the documentation produced by four HEIs based in one English region, an extensive questionnaire to a large sample of schools across nine Local Education Authorities (LEAs) within that region, and through in-depth interviews with six coordinators.

This article contextualises the issues through the literature and examines a range of factors impacting on the coordinator role. Charged with appointing, inducting and managing the work of mentors in the HEI partnerships with which their school are engaged, and experienced in understanding the demands and needs of ITT partnerships and their ability to develop colleagues, they might appear the obvious candidates to exemplify “professional multilingualism” in the development of their own mentor colleagues. Yet little work has been done on the identification of key issues in relation to their role assuring the quality of school mentors, or in relation to the changing nature of this role in the light of ever more multifaceted partnerships (Mutton and Butcher, 2007).

Conceptualisations of the ITT coordinator role

Although a decade ago, accounts of how individual HEIs addressed the issues of partnership development in ITT were becoming well-documented (for example, McIntyre 1997; Burton, 1998), missing to all is an authentic, grounded conceptualisation of the role of ITT coordinator in the schools in question. Furlong et al. (2000) describe the relationship between HEIs and schools as ‘complementary partnership’ in ITT in that:

“(t)he school and the university or college are seen as having separate and complementary responsibilities but there is no systematic attempt to bring these two dimensions into dialogue” (Furlong et al. 2000).

This may remain true, but with very little empirical data disseminated on the ITT coordinator in school partnerships, a clearer conceptualisation remains necessary. It is alluded to in some of the professional literature related to partnership in ITT and to mentoring in particular (see McIntyre and Hagger 1996; Brooks and Sikes 1997), and in the US context Portner (1998), who refers to the mentoring program coordinator. However, in England today the coordinator enjoys an even greater variety of roles than a decade ago, reflected in a confusing assortment of titles for individuals carrying out these functions. Furlong et al. (1997) talked about a ‘senior mentor’ (the person with overall co-ordinating responsibilities) in contrast to the ‘class mentor’ (the teacher whose focus is on the trainee’s learning on a day to day basis). Brooks and Sikes, (1997) highlighted the range of titles given to the role in different schemes, including professional tutor, professional mentor, ITT coordinator, ITT manager, and training manager. Our investigation of a sample of HEI documentation suggests this remains confusingly true. In addition, roles within the school are also not always limited to ITT. Many school-based coordinators may also have other staff development responsibilities such as the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), which maybe require a similar range of skills, understanding, qualities and characteristics (TTA, 2001). In addition the development of alternative routes into teaching such as the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), schemes offering qualifications through School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) providers, and the designation of certain schools as Training Schools (see Brooks, 2006), have all led to some schools quietly re-conceptualising the role of staff involved in these activities and in many cases expanding the role of those co-ordinating such work.

Tensions in the ITT coordinator role

We argue the ITT coordinator role falls broadly into four distinct areas, each in tension with the others. We have conceptualised these as managerial, pedagogical, evaluative and pastoral.

In terms of the managerial aspects of the work, coordinators generally oversee the school experience of individual trainees or groups of trainees, either from one provider or from more than one provider, and are responsible for liaising with the HEI(s), inducting the trainees into the school as a whole and into its systems, co-ordinating any school-based seminars, liaising with the school's senior management team and producing the schools' ITT policy (Brooks and Sikes, 1997; Furlong et al. 1997). In primary schools this managerial role may fall to the mentor or, in larger schools, there may be a delineation of roles with the 'senior mentor' planning and co-ordinating the trainee teacher's work within the school and the 'class mentor' taking responsibility for the trainee's learning (Furlong et al. 1997).

In relation to a pedagogic role, in most ITT partnerships the school-based coordinator is responsible for the organisation of a Professional Studies seminar programme that serves as an introduction to the school for the trainees and goes on to address a number of whole school issues.

The evaluative role relates to assessment. Within the competency based framework of the Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status (TTA, 2002) there are some aspects of professional practice, such as those relating to professional values that are

not assessed solely through performance in the classroom. Many authors (e.g. Brooks and Sikes, 1997) have acknowledged the contribution that the ITT coordinator makes in terms of assessing the competences of trainee teachers.

The pastoral contribution that school coordinators can make is alluded to occasionally in relation to overseeing the general well-being of the trainee teacher in the school (Pell, 1997) but little mention is made of any support, advisory or developmental role with colleagues acting as mentors. We argue these four aspects to the role, as elicited from literature often a decade old, are imbalanced and in tension. The underlying role assumptions contrast with more recent literature from the US (Utley et al. 2003), and published findings from other articles emerging from this research project (Mutton & Butcher, 2007, 2008).

The potential to be “professionally multilingual” for those undertaking the role may be significant and can be enhanced by the way in which the role is conceptualised by a given school or within any individual partnership. Utley et al. (2003) outline the way that in some Professional Development Schools in the United States, in conjunction with the HEI, the role of the “site co-ordinator” has been enhanced significantly and has become a full-time post within the school. The site co-ordinator’s role has developed in relation to the demands of implementing “the multiple functions of a partnership school” (teacher preparation, professional development, supporting curriculum development in the school and research and inquiry) but the nature of the development has also been influenced by the culture and leadership of the individual schools in question as well as by the personal qualities and interests of the site co-ordinators themselves. The following personal and

professional benefits that have accrued to the site co-ordinator as a result of enhancing the role are listed:

- Professional generosity embedded in relationships (i.e. working with other colleagues and sharing ideas for practice)
- Rejuvenation
- The enhancement of knowledge, abilities and skills
- New opportunities to exercise leadership (Utley et al. 2003)

This suggests a richer, more complex understanding of the coordinator role, highlighting a more multifaceted developmental role and perhaps pointing towards the “plurilingual professional”.

Primary/secondary split in the coordinator role

Within the literature related to the role of the school ITT coordinator certain issues and tensions are repeatedly identified. The way in which the mentoring role is conceptualised differently in primary schools is highlighted by Campbell and Kane (1996). In their research into the culture of mentoring in primary they found that it is often the class teacher who is responsible for providing support and guidance, not only in relation to classroom teaching and learning, but also in relation to wider school issues, and that these mentors have no colleague to monitor their work in this respect. They therefore argue for the management of mentoring to rest with a member of the school’s senior management team. They also highlight the tensions that can arise when the primary school mentor is not actually the class teacher to whom the

trainee is attached and when the delineation or responsibilities is implied rather than explicit.

Further evidence that the role seems still to be conceptualised very differently in primary schools is reported in Moyles et al. (1998). They reported the low proportion of primary schools in their survey with ‘mentoring coordinators’ and that even when such a role existed, the function seemed to be solely the allocation of trainee teachers to specific classes and then the allocation of mentors to these trainees. Interestingly, where Head teachers claimed to act as the coordinator,

“none of the mentors or new entrants interviewed was able to say how this role was fulfilled” (Moyles et al 1998).

The status of the ITT co-ordinator is a recurring motif in the literature. In secondary schools, some incumbents argue that:

“... it has to be done at deputy level...First and foremost, if you are writing summative reports, you have to have a lot of experience of trainee teachers in a range of disciplines and you have to have curricular knowledge across a wide area ...” (professional mentor/ deputy head teacher) (quoted in Brooks and Sikes 1997).

To benefit ITT partnerships, the coordinator role needs to be reconceptualised to ensure the status within an individual school is appropriate, reflecting the breadth of knowledge and the liaison/networking skills.

Methodology

We sought to address the problematic conceptualisation of the ITT coordinator by collecting data in three linked methods following review of the literature: an analysis of the course documentation from the four HEI providers within the region; a questionnaire sent to a large sample of ITT coordinators in the region; and interviews with a number of coordinators about the nature of their role. The intention was to explore:

- i) What the coordinator role involves in practice.
- ii) How the role complements other professional responsibilities.
- iii) What skills and knowledge and training are needed.

Documentation was requested from the four HEIs and insights gained from the documentation informed the development of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was initially piloted with four secondary and three primary coordinators, resulting in a number of adjustments to wording and focus. A total of 113 questionnaires were then posted out to schools in the south of England (62 secondary, 51 primary, in proportion to the balance of ITT partnership places across the four HEIs). The sample of schools was selected by compiling a list of the schools in the region known to work in partnership with one or more of the four HEI providers and then selecting a proportion of these schools on a stratified random basis. A range of differing questioning styles was deliberately used, from open-ended questions to closed questions where respondents were asked to select answers from a given list or give a

Likert rating to a statement. 33 questionnaires were completed and returned from secondary coordinators, 27 from primary, 60 in total.

Data from the questionnaires were analysed using quantitative and qualitative approaches, depending on the form of the question. In the latter, categories were developed by the project team that were grounded in the data, looking both at general themes and at differences between the response from primary and secondary coordinators.

In seeking to deepen understanding of the school coordinator role in ITT, six 45 minute semi-structured audio recorded telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of school coordinators. The two primary (responses 1, 2) were suggested by HEI B as active partner schools. The four secondary (3, 4, 5, 6) were all training schools working with a number of ITT providers and were suggested by the four HEIs undertaking the research.. Each interview consisted of the same prompts, asked in the same order by the same interviewer and each audio recording was transcribed, totalling 40 pages of data.

Findings: HEI documentation on the ITT coordinator role

A survey of the coordinator documentation provided by the four HEIs in the region provides partial evidence of the way each institution conceptualises the role. HEI A offered a Secondary flexible PGCE. Data was scrutinised from their: *Professional Development in ITT handbook, Partnership Handbook, CD ROM: mentor resources*

plus conversations between the researchers with a former and current PGCE Director, subject leaders and course manager.

HEI B offered Primary PGCE, BA Primary Teacher Education, Secondary PGCE, and work-based BA with QTS. Data was scrutinised from their: *Introduction to Partnership Handbook*, note to the researchers from the Senior Mentor for Primary Partnership, and a note to the researchers from the School Liaison Tutor re Secondary PGCE mentor training opportunities.

HEI C offered Secondary PGCE. Data was provided by a substantial email response to the researchers from the subject leader. HEI D offered Secondary PGCE, BA (Ed) Primary, and PGCE Primary. Data was provided from their: Minutes of *Professional Tutors' Development meetings* (x3), Materials for *new Professional Tutor/Subject Mentor Training*, *Professional Studies Handbook*, *Professional Tutor Guide* and *Primary ITE Partnership Handbook*

It became apparent that the role of the ITT Coordinator is conceptualised very differently in face-to-face secondary training, in distance learning secondary training and in face-to-face primary training. The three providers of traditional full-time secondary PGCE (HEIs B, C and D) are most similar in the roles and responsibilities described and the support offered. They also use the term “Professional Tutor” and have a well-established rationale for the role. Professional Tutors in secondary schools have three distinct roles in ITT. First, (pedagogical), is their responsibility for face-to-face teaching of professional studies to trainees. Second, (managerial), is their QA liaison with the relevant HEI, managing and monitoring the work of teams of

mentors, and moderating assessment of trainees by observation and scrutiny of trainees' files. They have to ensure mentors have the time and skills to provide the level of support needed to enable trainees to meet the standards for QTS. We wanted to discover more about the capacity and potential to develop these mentoring skills. Third (pastoral), is the responsibility to counsel trainees and/or mentors when problems occur. New Professional Tutors are trained, and experienced Professional Tutors receive regular course updating and are provided with opportunities to evaluate the partnership.

HEI A's flexible PGCE programme (which refers to a "school co-ordinator") is recognisable in terms of the management liaison with the HEI, and the pastoral function when problems occur, but differs from the above in two ways. First, because the distance learning materials provide the teaching input for the professional studies area, the coordinator role is one of quality assurance and monitoring standards, rather than hands-on teaching of professional studies. Second, the distance-learning dimension on a flexible PGCE impacts on the type of training/briefing offered. They have a clear rationale for the QA and monitoring of assessment roles, but are perhaps less directly engaged with training. Almost all of their coordinators were already experienced with other providers.

Most radically different is the primary PGCE/BA conceptualisation at HEIs B and D. This is entirely explained by the specific phase focus of the primary partnership role. It would seem that, on this evidence, the School Coordinator role delivering professional studies does not really exist in Primary ITT. At HEI B, the Head teacher or lead mentor or network mentor picks up a QA/monitoring role which is

incorporated into their observation of teaching and HEI liaison. The scale of the latter's partnership network enables the Network Mentor to support the role in other schools. At HEI D, the Partnership School Mentor Co-ordinator (PSMC) oversees the development of the learner teacher, taking particular responsibility for whole-school practices (such as risk assessment procedures) and enabling access to school documentation and relevant team meetings. The PSMC has a role in observing teaching, and they liaise with mentors and university tutors if there are development issues. They are included in the procedures for weak or failing trainees:

The School Mentor Co-ordinator may be invited to make an observation of the trainee teaching and read their file. Targets will be set...

So, even trawling for parallel roles between secondary and primary ITT partnerships, the different nomenclature makes comparison somewhat difficult. Further data collection in the form of a questionnaire survey and interviewing was therefore carried out in order to build a clearer conceptualisation and to clarify common strands across providers.

Questionnaire Data Analysis

Substantive data from the questionnaire is reported on elsewhere (see Mutton & Butcher, 2007, 2008). However, even brief analysis demonstrates the significant differences between primary and secondary respondents across all question categories. For example, far fewer primary coordinators are working with two or more HEIs than secondary colleagues, for whom a multiplicity of HEI partners was the

norm (over a quarter working with more than four). While anecdotal evidence suggest multiple HEI partners are considered a problem for schools (coordinators blame differences in paper work, varied student timetable dates and inconsistent assessment arrangements) it is fascinating that these questionnaires elicited a number of positive aspects for coordinators working with multiple providers. These included: providing wider opportunities for support and for sharing of ideas; offering wider opportunities for ITT coverage across the school and the curriculum; establishing a discourse around ITT across all subjects and year groups in the school. For example:

There is a cross-fertilisation of ideas between students-I can pick the “best” practice from each.

Secondary colleagues were more likely to be engaged in the delivery of a generic professional studies programme and in supporting trainees to prepare for job applications and interviews, while primary colleagues spent more time reviewing student work. While the majority of both sets of respondents cited close work with mentors, it is clear that most of a coordinator’s time is spent in managerial and organisational tasks, including extensive reading of documentation and liaison (for primary with mentors in other schools in their area, for secondary with heads of department and “involving staff from departments that do not take students”).

Questionnaire responses suggest secondary coordinators tend to be experienced teachers (15+ years) who have been in the role for many years. They love the job, finding aspects like the professional development through networking and the engagement with new ideas from trainees/HEIs energising. For them, there are

emerging issue of status: autonomous; delegated from Head; member of Senior Management Team; multi-functioning “Master teacher”; other responsibilities include CPD, NQTs, performance management. The scale of the role has changed enormously: the relatively new category of secondary Training schools (Brooks, 2006) are working with at least six providers, training between 30 and 45 trainees per year across all subjects.

In primary, “lead mentors” tend to be somewhat younger and less experienced. They enjoy the role, especially the potential to contribute to the HEI training through cluster meetings. Primary schools tend to work with one HEI and take a maximum of two trainees per year.

The main source of frustration for coordinators was centred on a lack of time to perform their role in a more professionally capable way. They represented this as knowing what should be done (through “in-depth sessions” or by holding “quality meetings for trainees”) but having insufficient non-contact time, or by finding it difficult to contact HEI tutors (who they know have to deal with higher numbers of trainees).

Telephone Interview Data Analysis

Based on issues emerging from analysis of the questionnaire data, the telephone interviews were structured under four headings: has the ITT coordinator role changed; what teaching do you do with trainees; what development with mentors; do you have a pastoral role in the ITT partnership?

Has the ITT coordinator role changed?

Primary colleagues reacted positively to what they saw as a changed role, enjoying enhanced responsibility for initial training and opportunities afforded by ITT for professional networking.

It's developed...there are now more partnerships running...more people, more ideas, we are bouncing off each other...the benefits are professionals getting together to talk. (2)

I remember when it was very much down to the university and we had a minimal role to play. I like the way it operates now, it's more down to schools. (1)

In secondary responses there was an empowered rhetoric around professional autonomy and liaison with other schools through ITT. The coordinator role is now seen as a more strategic one, at the centre of a school-wide commitment to ITT.

In effect I get invited to do 3 or 4 different professional tutor meetings. I go regularly to one because that's our largest. (3)

What teaching do you do with trainees?

A significant contrast between what secondary coordinators do in traditional face-to-face ITT and what primary or flexible distance learning provision

demands is best exemplified in the expectations in relation to the teaching of trainees.

(HEI B) have mentor training...we hosted that last year for the area...apart from those meetings and an informal chat, I'm not involved in training more than that. (2)

However, not only do secondary colleagues organise weekly professional studies programmes, they lead in the teaching of many of these sessions.

I coordinate and run or lead a lot of our professional development programme which is a weekly slot right across the year (3)

I deliver some of that core studies programme but I also facilitate a lot of the rest of it. (5)

This provision of a full professional studies programme is important for coordinators in its potential to enable a wide range of school staff to contribute as a way of enhancing their own professional development.

I decide what goes into the professional studies programme, I will often lead different sessions and professional studies programmes. I much prefer it if I can get different members of staff to do that, because it's such a professional development opportunity for them. I'm tending to bring members of staff in

who have expressed an interest in delivering something. I bring them in to team deliver with me, and then at a later stage they are on their own. (6)

Developing the mentors?

There appears to be some inconsistency about the extent to which coordinators are in a position to “mentor the mentors”. In primary, lead mentors report being relatively hands-off with their colleagues, perceiving all support and training for mentors to be provided by the HEI. In secondary, the increased scale of ITT provision in these schools means new mentors are increasingly having to be briefed by coordinators. Regular meetings organised by the coordinator for all mentors enable good ITT practice to be shared, but with pressure on all teachers’ time, this is not always possible. What is clear is that the ability to be around the whole school, to be available to chat informally with mentors about how things are going, is a vital element in successful ITT.

We work with more than one HEI: different HEIs have different expectations of the mentors, it’s also to do with cherry-picking the best bits from each institution...it is mentoring the mentors, if for example I have a new mentor I would work with that mentor in a slightly different way than I would with an established one. There are also formal training sessions for new mentors, and sharing of good practice sessions. I would also work with mentors troubleshooting. (6)

I used to probably have mentor meetings three or four times a year, where we can swap information and ideas, and discuss if there are any problems. Now I tend to pick up issues with individuals when they arrive...I have three or four new mentors next year and it may be that they need more support from me... what I'm not achieving here at the moment is shared good practice. (3)

Interestingly, the mention of induction tutors suggests a real gap in training and professional development. Whether the skills accumulated by ITT coordinators are generic and could be explicitly transferred to NQT contexts is worthy of a further research study.

I oversee the work of the mentors and act as their mentor...it's very informal and it ought not to be...subconsciously I keep an eye on the mentors, talk to them about what they are doing. (5)

It is important for mentors in schools to talk about how things are going and share what is going on, so we meet once a half term...often people in my role do NQTs as well and I think induction tutors are less clear on how to help an NQT than how to help a trainee. (4)

Do you have a pastoral role in the ITT partnership?

Although some of the literature discusses a pastoral role for ITT coordinators, and interviewees reported being happy to “step in” as needed, there is little evidence that

this is a key dimension. Rather, the role appears a little more distant, with an occasional intermediary role as a quality assurance ombudsman.

Should there be problems...I would then contact the general tutor and we would discuss the issues...my age also generally puts me in a paternal type role, as the majority of our trainees are younger than me. (3)

Unless the trainee has a problem with their mentor they would mostly go to them. If they were having personal or professional problems, then the mentor would come to me. Occasionally the university have contacted me and said there is a problem that doesn't need to go any further. (4)

The pastoral role is enhanced by every professional studies session that we have...I am always in the room even if I'm not actually delivering a session. (6)

In summary, although the interview data has been gathered from a relatively small sample of keen and enthusiastic participants, a number of interesting threads can be detected which extends what the literature suggests about the role, and complements what our HEI documentation and questionnaire responses illuminated. The ITT coordinator role involves significant management responsibilities, both outwards to the HEI(s) and inwards with departments and individual mentors. Secondary coordinators enjoy regular teaching opportunities in professional studies sessions, and are able to facilitate full programmes by opening up professional development

opportunities to other staff. The pastoral role is an occasional reactive one rather than a proactive element.

The ITT role complements other professional responsibilities shared by many coordinators, including responsibility for NQTs. The skills and knowledge are accumulated through experience rather than relying on training, and are mainly developed through networking with HEI ITT tutors and coordinators in other schools.

Conclusion

In England, both the academic literature and national policy has implicitly presented the school coordinator as the key to successful ITT partnership, but understanding of the role is limited to prescription (as evidenced in the HEI documentation) with little description and even less analysis (unlike the mentor role which enjoys a plethora of attention). In spite of the references in the professional literature to the role of the ITT coordinator in schools, there is still little evidence informing the sector's understanding of how this role is being fulfilled. Our research sought to establish what constitutes effective practice, how school-based ITT coordinators manage the tensions inherent in the role, the way in which differing conceptualisations of partnership affect the way in which coordinators fulfil their responsibilities, and the benefits that accrue from performing the role.

The literature highlights four strands. The managerial role (oversight/liaison, induction) figures most prominently in terms of time involved, but our research suggests this is often perceived by coordinators as a bureaucratic drain of time, and as

such represents a lost opportunity for coordinators to utilise a range of the skills for which they were appointed (as professional developers). The other three aspects: pedagogical (leading professional studies teaching in a dialectic of the ideal versus the practical); evaluative (moderating assessment of professional values outside classroom performance) and pastoral (general well-being of trainees) are less prominent. There is little on their role in supporting and developing ITT mentors in their own schools.

We argue this highlights a pressing need to reconceptualise the coordinator role. At present the potential impact of the role in developing the mentors is being lost through limited understanding and difficulties in disseminating good practice. Our analysis of four HEIs' documentation confirms the school coordinator role suffers from different nomenclature and different conceptualisation across: traditional secondary ("Professional Tutor" teaching professional studies, monitoring mentors, liaison with HEI partners, regular partnership meetings); traditional primary ("Lead mentor" linking school with HEI, leading clusters); flexible secondary ("School coordinator" as gatekeeper with a QA role).

The coordinator's substantive role is in managing complex programmes of ITT in schools, often shouldering extensive liaison within school, between schools and with a number of HEIs. There is such pressure on time that any opportunities coordinators might welcome to mentor their mentors are near impossible to find. To be more effective, ITT needs to utilise the plurilingual possibilities of the coordinator in a reconceptualised developmental role.

What might a reconceptualised ITT coordinator role look like?

It does appear that, to support the learning of their mentors as well as their trainees, there is space in such a conceptualisation for coordinators to develop their own mentors as part of a virtuous cycle of continuing professional development. This seems to be missing from the English experience. With ITT in England continuing to undergo significant change, and with the growing expertise in partner schools in terms of the preparation of beginning teachers, the role of the ITT coordinator has the potential to become a significant and increasingly rewarding one. At present the way in which the role is conceptualised depends to a great extent on the nature of individual partnerships between schools and HEIs, the emphasis placed in the school on the professional development of new entrants to the profession and, to a certain extent, on the personality and characteristics of those carrying out the role.

ITT coordinators need all the attributes of effective mentors yet much more. They need managerial skills, including: the design and implementation of the school-based programme; liaison with mentors and members of the school's senior management team; liaison with the HEI or other provider; provision of effective training programmes for those on work-based routes into teaching. They also need the ability to engage with adult learners in appropriate ways and to deliver thought-provoking and challenging programmes that enable trainees to make sense of what they are learning from a wide range of perspectives. If coordinators are to exemplify

“professional multilingualism”, they also need the opportunity to develop their own mentors.

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